



# The Hostile Sky: A Hellcat Flyer in World War II

*James W. Vernon*

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In the summer of 1942 Jim Vernon, a nineteen-year-old college student in Butte, Montana, joined the U.S. Navy's aviation cadet training program and by the spring of 1945 was flying F6F Hellcats from the USS *Ticonderoga* off of the coast of Japan. This memoir of his years at war provides a carrier pilot's view of the conflict in the Pacific during the final months of the war when the atomic bombs were dropped and Japan capitulated. He gives an up-close-and-personal account of life in a bomber-fighter squadron and the roller-coaster emotions involved in combat sorties over the hostile sea and land.

As a member of VBF-87, Vernon offers a unique glimpse into the past at a time when teenagers matured rapidly as they faced the realities of war. He has recorded his own feelings about meeting the challenges of war, his love of flying, and the camaraderie of his flying mates--both in the air and on liberty--along with the factual details of battle that contribute important dimensions to the overall story of the air war. Added to these stirring memories are his entertaining descriptions of the mobilization and training of carrier pilots and his recounting of the high incidence of non-combat fatalities and the change in the composition of the air group in response to the Kamikaze threat. Such a book not only will appeal to aviators everywhere but also will prove to be a thrilling read for those interested in World War II and air combat.

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